

[Interview with Vito Cacciola #43]

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Interview

with

Vito Cacciola

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by

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Merton R. Lovett.

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“As well as remembered”

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INTERVIEW WITH VITO CACCIOLA

by Merton R. Lovett

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(from memory)

“Very nearly, Mr. Lovett, I spend-ed Easter in de new jail. I will tella to you my great temptation. Only by de grace of God did I defeata it.

“Does you know a dirty skunka, call-ed George Ash?

“No, he worka at de post office. He has de ugly fact that will frighten de children. His character, it is worsa.

“He bringa to me some shoes. They was full of de holes. He ask-ed how much would it cost to maka them like new. I replya, ‘One dollar and seventy cents.’

“De night before Easter he coma back. His shoes are fix-ed. My, my, but they looka nice. He saya himself that they is O.K.

“For payment he giva me one dollar. It is not enough. I says, ‘De price, Mr. Ash, it is one dollar and seventy cents. It is de price you agreea to pay.’

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"Then he calla me de robber. He usa desulting words.

"No, I did not giva him de shoes. I insista that he paya seventy cents more.

"Bye and bye he says, 'All righta, Vito, I willa paya you de seventy cents next Saturday.' But I refus-ed. I tella him I needa de money for Easter.

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"Then he calla me de pirate. He leaves, but slama my door with anger and mucha force. De noise and his rudeness upsetta me. Never de less I keepa calm.

"By jingo, Mr. Lovett, the story, it only begins. In a few minutes he dismounta from his automobile once more and coma back in de shop.

"What do you think he offers to me? It was de check — de check for seventy cents.

"No, I did not wanta de check. I aska him, what can I do with check, since de bank is already clos-ed? Besides, I have a disrespect for checks. Many times I have been cheat-ed. De checks, what you calla it, leapa back.

"He tella me that he does not care what I does with check. He saya I can sticka it up — —— de words I cannot use, Mr. Lovett. He desulta me some more.

"Then he goes out, but slama the door once more. Oh, Lord, he banga it so bard that de glass breaka. De pieces falla on de floor.

"What does I do, Mr. Lovett? I forgeta my good intentions. I graba my hammer lika this and chasea him with blood in de eye.

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"I graba de door of auto and tella him many things. I saya words for which I am now asham-ed. I tella him I breaka his head de same as he breaka my door.

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“No, thank a de good Lord, I does not hurta him. He is mucha frightened. Quickly my anger leava me. I thinka to myself, tomorrow it is Easter. I saya to myself, ‘Vito, your brother Peter exspecta you to dinner. It will griva him if you visit de jail.’

“By jingo, I marcha back to shop. I fighta my rage. I starta to work on machine. I geta cool.

“Would you believe it, Mr. Lovett, that skunka was not satisfied? He open-ed my door and desulta me once more. Then he slama it again, so hard some more glass smasha on de floor.

“I was infuriat-ed. I graba de iron bar. But my will it is strong. With great difficulty, I keepa calm. I holda back my feet from pursuit.

“What did I do then? I calla de policemans. I tella him de story. He aska me; ‘Shall I arrest de crooker?’

“I saya ‘No. His bad heart will punisha him.’ But I gotta his shoes. See, here they is. He cannot geta them till he paya in full. He must also inreburse me for de damages to my door.

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“De Bible tella us, when de skunka hita us on one cheek, that we must turna to him de other. It also saya if de thief taka our shirt, we should give to him de overcoat.

“By jingo, I hava de doubts. Does you suppose if Jesus liva today he would teacha so? I think today there is too many gangsters. If we does not resista them we will someday be dead-ed or nak-ed.”

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“Did you hear how de young cobbler near Bow Street geta married?

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"No. It was de great mistake. Business now is poor. Some weeks he only taka in five or six dollars and he has to paya his rent and for de leather.

"His wife, she is disappoint-ed. She tella him so. She slapa him without de gloves.

"Sure, Mr. Lovett. Some weeks he has earn-ed fifteen or sixteen dollars. Then there is kisses and enbraces.

"De rest of de time they fighta like cats and dogs.

"When peoples tella me I should geta married, I say, 'Whata de dickens?'"

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"So, you is de judge, and will giva prizes to childrens who writa de best essay for de Legion. What does de children writa about?

"Rumania? What is that?

"Oh, so it is de nation in Europe. One of de allies who fighta in World War.

"Did you know, Mr. Lovett, that my brother in Sicily once win-ed de prize?

"Yes. In Messina, which is big city lika Boston, de artist builda monument for de soldiers. De Mayor he offers price for de best, what you calla it — subscription? Excusa me, inscription is right. This inscription de sculptor will carva on de bottom of monument.

"My brother he geta de prize. They lika his inscription best.

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“It is de brother what teach in de college in Italy. He says, ‘Living or dying, I lova my country best, firsta, lasta, always.’ Is it not mosta beautiful?”